Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 5, with the following rewritten paragraph:

Fine fabric dust particles on the slides can create snake-tailed strips on laser excitation. These strips are normally higher intensity than the signal level. To simulate this noise, an equiprobable multi-directional snake noise has been generated consisting of some number, N_{seg}, of segments. Analogously to scratch noise, the intensity parameterized as a ratio, κ_{sn}, giving the average-signal-to-snake-noise intensity level, the number of snakes, snake thickness W_{sn}, and a random length, L_{sn}, given as a multiple of the spot size. The latter is modeled as a uniform distribution: $L_{sn} \sim U[L_{sn1}, L_{sn2}]$. FIGURE 14 shows different parameter settings for snake noise. FIGURE 14 shows the noise for incremental parameter settings: FIGURE ~~15~~14(a) shows $N_{seg} = 5$, $L_{sn} \sim U[5, 10]$, $\kappa_{sn} = 0.50$, $W_{sn} = 2$ pixels; FIGURE ~~15~~14 (b) shows $N_{seg} = 10$, $L_{sn} \sim U[5, 30]$, $\kappa_{sn} = 0.33$, $W_{sn} = 3$ pixels; FIGURE ~~15~~14 (c) shows $N_{seg} = 15$, $L_{sn} \sim U[~~15~~ 5, 80]$, $\kappa_{sn} = 0.25$, $W_{sn} = 5$ pixels. The direction of the tail was randomly chosen with equal probability for each.